

Message Text

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15

ACTION AF-06

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 AGR-05 AID-05 EB-07 IO-10

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FM AMCONSUL ASMARA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3609

INFO AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA

AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO

C O N F I E N T I A L ASMARA 0839

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS SOCI ECON ET

SUBJECT: SITUATION IN GHINDA

1. SUMMARY: MR. JAMES MASON, AMERICAN MISSIONARY ATTACHED TO AMERICAN EVANGELICAL MISSION IN GHINDA, REPORTS THAT THE FOOD SITUATION IN GHINDA IS DIFFICULT BUT NOT CRITICAL, WITH SOME RELIEF SUPPLIES BEING ALLOWED TO BE DISTRIBUTED; ECONOMY IS AT VIRTUAL STANDSTILL THOUGH SOME COMMODITIES ARE AVAILABLE AND ORANGES ARE PERMITTED TO BE SENT TO ASMARA; SECURITY SITUATION IS TENSE BUT TOWN HAS NOT EXPERIENCED EITHER FRONT RAIDS OR EPMG RETALIATION; AND MORALE OF AMCITS AND LOCALS IS FAIR, THOUGH ALL ARE PESSIMISTIC ABOUT FUTURE. END SUMMARY.

2. FOOD SITUATION: MASON DESCRIBED THE FOOD SITUATION AS DIFFICULT, I.E. LIMITED VARIETY AND NO STOCKS BUT NOT YET CRITICAL. EPMG HAS CEASED RESTRICTIONS ON FLOW OF FOOD TO GHINDA EVEN PERMITTING LOCAL CATHOLIC

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PRIEST TO BRING FROM ASMARA 500 QUINTALS OF CORN TO BE

DISTRIBUTED TO POOR AND DESTITUTE RESIDENTS. REFF AND WHEAT ARE VERY SCARCE, WHILE SUGAR IS SELDOM AVAILABLE.

3. ECONOMY: GHINDA AGRICULTURAL ESTATE, WHICH HAS BEEN NATIONALIZED, IS NOT FUNCTIONING, AS EFFORTS AT IRRIGATION WERE ABANDONED. MOST VEGETABLES AND FRUITS PRODUCED IN COMMERCIAL PROPORTIONS AT GHINDA REQUIRE IRRIGATION, YET APPARENTLY AS PRODUCERS EXPECTED TO BE DENIED ACCESS TO TRADITIONAL MARKET FOR PRODUCTS, NO LARGE-SCALE COMMERCIAL PLANTING WAS UNDERTAKEN. GHINDA'S ONLY ACCESS FOR COMMERCIAL ACTIVITY IS TO ASMARA TO WHICH IT IS PERMITTED TO SEND ITS SMALL CROPS OF ORANGES AND FROM WHICH IT RECEIVES CEREAL GRAINS. TRADE ACTIVITY IN OTHER COMMODITIES SUCH AS TEXTILES AND FUEL ARE CONDUCTED ON AD HOC BASIS ONLY. THERE ARE NO REPORTS OF EPMG FORCES DESTROYING FOOD CROPS IN GHINDA AREA.

4. SECURITY: MASON REPORTS EPMG FORCES IN GHINDA AND DONGOLLO ARE GENERALLY WELL-BEHAVED, BEING RESPONSIBLE FOR ONLY ONE ROBBERY/MURDER IN THE LAST FEW MONTHS. FRONT ACTIVITY IN THE AREA IS MINIMAL; MOST RECENT INCIDENT BEING \$4800 PAYROLL ROBBERY FROM SMALL ORANGE PRODUCER. IN RETALIATION, EPMG TROOPS ARRESTED FOUR VILLAGE ELDERS AND HELD THEM UNTIL \$4800 WAS RAISED FROM RESIDENTS AND RETURNED TO GOVERNMENT.

5. MORALE: MORALE OF AMERICAN MISSIONARIES APPEARS FAIRLY GOOD AS THEY ARE ABLE TO OBTAIN FOOD AND MEDICINES IN MONTHLY TRIP TO ASMARA WITHOUT SERIOUS DIFFICULTY. AMERICAN HOSPITAL IS FUNCTIONING WELL, THOUGH MASON WONDERS WHETHER ASSISTANCE IT PROVIDES TO LOCAL INHABITANTS JUSTISIES RISKS TO AMERICAN AND OTHER FOREIGN PERSONNEL. MORALE OF GHINDA'S RESIDENTS IS POOR AS THEY ARE SQUEEZED BY HIGH UNEMPLOYMENT AND CONTINUING INSECURE SITUATION.
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